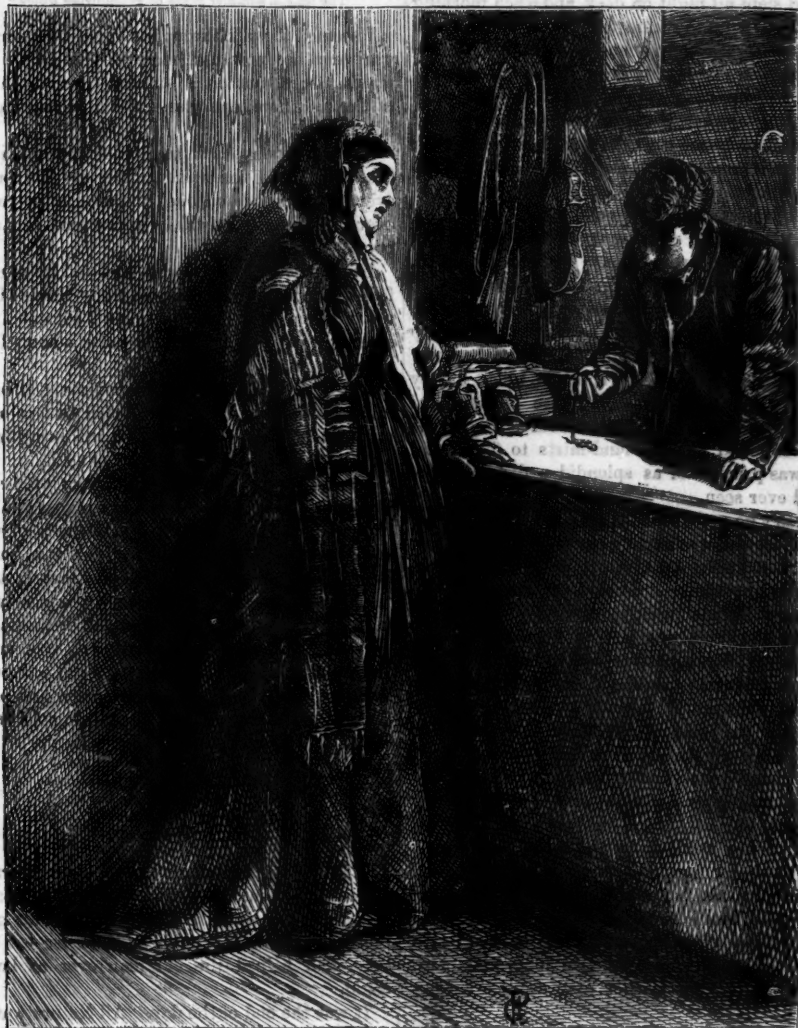


THE QUIVER

Saturday, January 5, 1867.



"It contained my picture when I was a boy."—p. 244.

HOME.—A CHRISTMAS STORY.

MY holiday was just over. At about half-past five in the morning of the loveliest of the very few lovely mornings the early autumn of 186—gave us, the rickety, uncomfortable screw

steamer, which had brought us over from St. Malo, neared a tiny little watering-place on the Sussex coast, called Littlehampton. It was Saturday. I had arranged to get back again comfort-

ably by the end of the week, in order that I might begin fresh with my work on the following Monday. I wish that I were an artist, that I could paint, or that I had the pen of Mr. Ruskin to describe, the fresh autumn loveliness of that August morning!

I had slept all night on deck, and when morning broke I went up to where the captain kept watch over his vessel's course and the drowsy passengers that were under his care. There was a shiver of cold when the night died. I felt just one sharp chilly pang as the old day was borne away on the wind, and gathered my rugs together round me; and then, in another instant, I knew that a fresh day was born.

I watched the stars go out. One by one they disappeared, and a silver-grey haze stole up from the sea through which our steamer ploughed, hurrying on towards home.

Littlehampton was fast asleep when we came alongside the harbour, which is some little way up the river Arun; on either side of the river the water meadows were wrapt in a sheet of mist; but by the time the sleepy custom-house officials had released us and our luggage from custody, the bright sun had put the land-mists to flight, and there was promise of as splendid a day as any of us had ever seen.

"I can't go up to London this morning," I said to a porter, who was putting my traps, with the rest of the London luggage, into the train, which was alongside the quay. "Lock it up in the cloak-room until I come for it."

When the train was issuing from the station, bearing my fellow-passengers to town, I was swimming about, for the first time for many months, in the sea.

I made the most of my day. I was put to rights, after my bathe, at a barber's, and ate a hearty breakfast; and after that, with half-a-dozen newspapers under my arm, I went down to the beach.

The papers read, I helped some little children to build sand castles, and moats, and fortifications, which would have made M. Vauban stare; and, the little ones weary, I strolled on to the strip of grass which skirts the beach, and acted professional to two jolly little boys who were playing cricket and wanted a long-stop.

The sun shone brighter than ever at midday, and there was not a cloud to be seen. But I left the sea, and the children, and the mermaids, and the pleasant rattle of the receding waves from the beach, and strolled on by the river Arun to Arundel.

I have seen pleasant spots in this England of ours, but few situations have pleased me more than Arundel. Here, indeed, I saw—

"A league of grass, washed by a slow, broad stream
That, stirred with languid pulses of the oar,
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,
Barge-laden, to the arches of a bridge
Crowned with the castle towers.

The fields between
Are dewy fresh, browsed by deep-uddered kine,
And all about the large lime feathers blow—
The lime, a summer home of murmuring wings."

I seemed to walk through a deserted town. It was very hot now, and most of the people were within doors, but on I strolled towards the old castle, and there, under an old oak in the park, I fell asleep.

"The best way back to Littlehampton is over the fields," said the waiter, when my dinner was over. "You need not touch the road, after you get over the bridge. It will be a nice walk this afternoon."

I took the waiter's advice, and did go over the fields. I am glad for many reasons I did. Had I not done so, I should have missed a scene I shall ever remember, and been deprived of a story I shall never forget.

But first of all I will describe a picture, so beautiful and touching that it cannot fail to live in my memory, and you will see how it led to my finding a friend and hearing the history of a life.

I had left the road and the towers of Arundel Castle behind me, and had struck across the fields through green meadows and little belts of wood, and corn-fields well-nigh ripe for the harvest. It was the end of the day. The trees cast long shadows on the ground, and work was nearly over now. As I passed a little English homestead in my path, the gate of the farmyard was opened, and from it issued an old labourer and a little boy. These two, who had borne "the labour and heat of the day," were going home, shouldering the baskets which had contained their midday meal.

"Rest and peace at length have come;
Rest and peace, how deep and vast!
And each heart is whispering, 'Home,
Home at last!'"

The little boy, full of mirth and activity, ran on before the old man, singing and whistling snatches of songs as he went; but he waited for his grandfather—I'm sure it was his grandfather—at every stile, and helped the old man over as best he could.

It was the end of the day. All Nature was very still, and soon the sound of a tolling bell fell upon my ear. I passed over a few more fields, and suddenly came upon an old ivy-covered church, from whose tower the bell was tolling.

I was some way in advance of the old labourer and the little boy, and when I came to the gates of the churchyard and saw the old sexton with his hat off looking down the shady lane by the side of the gate, I knew why the bell was tolling. I lifted the

latch of the gate, and walked into the churchyard.

Close to the church-porch was a newly-made grave, round which some little village children were standing, who peeped every now and then half timidly into its deep mouth. The children were very still, and the old bell above their heads tolled on.

The church-door was open, and I walked in. The last rays of the sunlight streamed through the painted window over the chancel, and fell upon the altar and the marble tombs on the walls and the stone floor, all rough and uneven with age. They fell, too, upon the white head of the old clergyman, who sat in the quiet chancel, waiting until the bell should cease to toll, and his voice break the silence of the scene in its stead. It was indeed the end of the day.

The sad procession came at last. Very simple it was. A young man was the only mourner. We stood round the grave, and the sun went down, and at last the old clergyman closed his book and walked away.

"Poor fellow," whispered a woman by my side. "He is an only son, and now he will never see his mother any more."

I put off my departure from Littlehampton until the last train, and when the time came for me to go, and I was taking my ticket for London, I was surprised to see by my side the young man who had been weeping so bitterly over his mother's grave in the old churchyard.

I heard him ask for a ticket for London. When I knew that we were to journey together so far, I addressed a few ordinary words of conversation to him, and finding that he replied readily, I proposed that we should travel together.

I did not allude, of course, to the sad scene that I had witnessed that afternoon, but I soon discovered that he was aware that I had been one of the little group that stood in the churchyard when the sun was setting.

My young friend seemed very anxious to allude more particularly to the dear one who was lying in the ground, and I allowed him to run on, listening very attentively to the touching story he related to me.

"If you only knew the value of my poor dear mother, now dead and gone," he said, "you would indeed pity me. The pure happiness of these last few months only makes me look back with keener sorrow and regret to the long years which have preceded them. The depth of her suffering and the sadness of her life no tongue can well describe; it is torture enough, Heaven knows, for me to contrast them with my own folly and thoughtlessness. But you ought to hear the whole story."

We were in the train now, and on our way to London.

"Many years ago," my friend went on, "when I was quite a youth—a boy, full of egotism and conceit, and like many other boys discontented with my lot in life, and both headstrong and passionate—I left my employers; quitted my home; deserted my father and mother, and worked my way in an emigrant vessel to Australia. My father was in delicate health at the time, but I was too selfish to reflect on the consequences of his death, in which case my mother would be thrown helpless and friendless on the world. I was born in the little village you passed through this afternoon. My father was employed up at Arundel Castle, but his constitution was not strong enough for him to earn much, and part at least of my wages should have been devoted to the old parents, who had shown such affection for me all through my life. But, as I said before, I was headstrong and passionate, and, thinking about no one but myself, I left the old country, and my home and parents, in order to try a new life in a new world.

"The hardships of the voyage, and the roughness of my life, when I got out, took a great deal of the conceit out of me; and when I had been in Australia for a year or two, and as each Christmas-time came round, my thoughts went back to the little village, and my father and mother, and I longed for a little of their love, friendless and among strangers as I was, I had almost made up my mind, like the prodigal son of old, to scrape together what little money I could get and return home, and show that I had thoroughly repented of my folly, when I received a letter from the old clergyman of my native village.

"The letter had travelled after me from place to place, and did not come into my hands until very many months after it had been dispatched from England. The news it contained was sad enough. My father was dead, and my mother in the deepest distress, with no soul in the world to look to for support. Private charity alone kept her from the workhouse. The clergyman implored me, either to return, or to remit, from time to time, sufficient funds to help my mother in the hour of her distress. The bitter tears rolled down my cheeks at last, and my iron heart was softened. I did not even answer the letter, but in the very next vessel that sailed I went back to England. We had a long and tedious journey, but I arrived at Liverpool at last, and lost no time in making my way home. Judge of my surprise, when I was informed that my mother had left the village, and no one knew whither she had gone. The old clergyman was as distressed about the matter as his parishioners, but none of them could give me any clue to her discovery. They told me of her patient suffering, and of how she had longed to see me again before she died; but, of course, no one knew

for certain where I was to be found, and it would have been folly to have sent her out to Australia, on the chance of finding me.

"Sorrowfully I left the village, and made my way to London to look for employment.

"It was Christmas-time. The booksellers' shops were full of bright pictures and temptingly-bound volumes; and there were gorgeous displays of beef and mutton in the butchers' shops. Rosettes were pinned into turkeys' breasts, and their companion sausages were chained to them by festoons of pretty ribbons. Inside the large plate-glass windows and well-arranged shop-fronts all seemed bright and happy; but outside, the wind blew cruelly cold, and the people walked fast, or shivered along, as the case might be, over the white pavement.

"A story-book Christmas, with its frost and snow and icicles, is very pretty and highly conventional, no doubt, but it is a terrible time for the poor. Those of us who have got good warm winter clothing, and cosy gloves and furs and comforters, think little of the sharp, piercing winds that whistle down the streets, and merely walk faster, or run along, to keep off the ill effects of the cold. But what of those who can turn to no cupboard for a thicker coat or a warmer dress—who are but scantily covered at night, and have but a scrap of fire to warm their fingers at in the day-time?

"It was very near Christmas, and I repeat that it was terribly cold.

"I saw enough of the sufferings of the poor. I obtained employment in a jeweller's shop—at least, not quite that, but they did sell jewellery there. It was at the corner of a narrow court, and although there was a smart window, with plenty of trinkets and rings in it, facing the street, there was a dark door a little way up the court, which was opened and shut pretty constantly during the day at the cruel Christmas-time to which I allude. I had to receive boots, and shoes, and blankets, and warm clothing, and coats, and dresses over the counter—necessary and highly useful articles, all of them, at such a

bitter time; but so was bread, and many of those who came to the shop in which I was serving were sadly in need of it, though it was merry Christmas-time.

"It was Christmas Eve, and I had been well employed all day. One can part with a coat or a pair of boots for a day or so, in order to get something to eat on Christmas Day.

"The shutters had been put up, and I was just preparing to leave, when I heard the well-known rattle of the bolt of one of the little doors which shut out that portion of the shop from the street. A woman, closely-veiled, was in one of the boxes.

"She was evidently unaccustomed to such places, and did not speak. She almost trembled in the corner of the box.

"I waited for her to give me the article on which she wished money, and to name the amount she required.

"Still she did not speak; but taking a little packet from her bosom, she handed it to me across the counter.

"I am sure I heard a stifled sob.

"I undid the paper. It contained an old gilt locket. I opened that.

"It contained my picture when I was a boy. The locket fell from my hands, and I think I cried out something.

"The woman lifted up her veil.

"It was my mother!

"It was like old times again on that happy Christmas Day. I had been forgiven long before I accompanied her to church on Christmas morning. We took some comfortable rooms, and happiness seemed dawning upon both of us. But God willed it otherwise, and took my mother from me. His will be done! I buried my mother to-day, as you saw."

The train arrived at London Bridge station just as my young friend concluded his story.

We parted; but since that time he has always dined with me on Christmas Day.

C. W. S.

CHRISTMAS.

A RELIGION without festivals would be no religion for human nature. To say, then, that Christianity has its festivals, is only to say that it is a religion adapted to man as he is at present. Every other religion has festivals of some kind or other. Christianity alone has festivals which are founded on fact.

This peculiarity of Christianity is sometimes overlooked, as much by its friends as its foes.

That its foes should pass it by is natural enough; but its friends should only play into the enemy's hand if they did any such thing. What a pillar of stones was in the East, a celebration like Christmas is to us in the West. It is a festival which commemorates a fact. It thus challenges inquiry to the fact itself, and stands or falls with the historical truth of the great event it is intended to keep in memory. In this respect the festivals of the Old and New Testament are alone

and unique. The purpose of the festival, as calling attention to the fact, is distinctly assumed in the account of the appointment of the Passover:—"And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover," &c. (Exod. xii. 25-27).

Now, what mean we by the service of Christmas? Other religions have festivals as well as ours, but not one of them can be traced up to a distinct historical fact. Follow them up to their source, and the story is lost in myth or fable of some kind. So it is with the festivals, of the ancient Egyptians and the modern Hindoos. Some of these were myths or phenomena personified, others were legends or persons allegorised; but neither could be traced back to a fountain-head of fact. Take the beautiful story of the love of Diana and Endymion as an instance of a myth, and the life and adventures of the Greek Hercules or the Hindoo Krishna as instances of legends. There were festivals in honour of these deities. But could a bystander challenge the officiating priest with this question, "What mean ye by this service?" Cicero tells us, that one augur could not look another in the face without laughing at the absurdity of the superstition of which they were the recognised ministers. The thought of a religion resting on historical facts, and whose festivals, recurring annually, should, like the king's champion at a coronation, challenge all comers to dispute the facts if they could, is one of the peculiarities of Christianity not sufficiently attended to. Those who in their zeal for purity of doctrine would set aside all its rites and suppress all ceremonies as Popish or pagan, would make a great mistake if (which is not at all likely) they could bring the mass of our countrymen round to their point of view. With Christmas and Easter we should lose all those sensible evidences to the truth of Christianity. Whether it would be the mark of a sensible man to despise these aids to his belief, we leave those to decide who know human nature best.

"But the facts would remain as unimpeachable as ever," some one will say, "whether we observe or not the festivals which grow out of those facts." So they would, we admit, but there is all the difference in the world between a dead fact and a living one. A dead fact consists of two parts, a departed spirit, which leads a kind of twilight existence in the shadow-land of opinion, and a corpse which is dried and dissolved to dust in the museum of history. But a living fact resists this kind of decomposition. Critics of a sceptical school would spirit away one part of Christianity

to the ghost-land of old opinions, and shrivel up the other part into a few facts in the life of a certain carpenter of Nazareth. Have they succeeded in thus disembodying Christianity? Is the mission of Christ only an obsolete fact, and his doctrine a bygone opinion? Those who say so have a ready answer to their assertion.

No fact can be considered dead so long as it produces a corresponding effect. The old logical rule may be applied to historical as well as to natural causes: *Cessante causa, cessat effectus*.

The test of a fact, then, lying in its effect, the great Christian festivals, have a value on this account, that they not only testify to a fact but also to one that is a living fact. Coleridge, in his "Aids to Reflection," says that "truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered as so true that they lose all the power of truth, and lie bedridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors. To restore such a truth," he adds, "to its first uncommon lustre you need only *translate it into action*." Here is a thought for us to lay to heart this Christmas-time. With us it rests, humanly speaking, whether the Christ of history is to be a dead or a living fact in the age to come. As the yearly festival of the birth of Christ comes round, men will ask each other, "How do Christians keep this feast? What Christ is to them, that they will be to us. If Christians are the better of the birth of Christ, we of the world in its turn must be the better for it too." "Christ was born for us eighteen hundred years or more ago. Is he born in us now? and if so, is there any whisper of the angels' hymn still echoing down the ages as they pass—'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men?'"

Thus, the obvious lesson which this festival teaches is, that the fact and the effect must correspond exactly each to each. That Christ was born for us is the fact; the effect should be that Christ is born in us. If the one was undoubtedly a fact, the other should certainly be something more than a mere figure. This at once puts the question of keeping Christmas in a new light. Christmas should be a standing witness to the world, not only of the Christ who was, but also of the Christ who is, and of the Christ who is to be.

Surely Christmas is intended to be a festival which shall quicken the pulse of humanity, and awaken the thought of the brotherhood of all men in the minds of men too distracted with the pleasures, and cares, and riches of this life, to think of it at other times. But at Christmas there is a twelve days' truce to private and public feuds of all kinds. Between Christmas Eve and Twelfth Night, something like the "truce" of God is felt in all circles. Whether the gods of Olympus going on a twelve days' visit to the pious Ethiopians was a

myth respecting the winter solstice, we leave to the learned to say; but the myth may have a moral to us, if we can put ourselves in the position of these "blameless Ethiopians" of whom Homer writes. It is something to be reminded once a year, that God has indeed dwelt with men; that he took our flesh on him in order that he might impart to us of his Spirit. But in our case it should not be twelve days' sojourning of the gods with men—a brief theophany, which is all that the heart of man, in the heathen world, could conceive of the union between God and man.

All the deep meaning of Christmas, or, to use the language of theology, the mystery of the Incarnation, is not yet understood as it will be when we shall see Him as he is; but, at least, we think more deeply and enter more devoutly into the mystery than divines were in the habit of doing a generation or two ago. It was too much the custom of divines to accept the Incarnation as a great mystery, without going on to consider what relations that mystery bore to mankind at large, and of our duties to them. If theologians thought on the question at all, it was only as a first stage in the work of Christ; and in formal, or school divinity, the person of Christ and the work of Christ were treated as distinct propositions, each infinitely true in itself, but not necessarily dependent the one on the other. The consequence of these was obvious; theology and life were separated. Christmas was the first and greatest of the Church festivals; but the interest of the world at large in Christmas was hardly thought of, or, if considered at all, only by rash theorists, whose hasty guesses were worse than the narrow dogmas which they were intended to supersede.

The result of this unhappy division between the Church and the world—or rather between theology and life—is seen in our Church festivals more than anywhere else. Christmas—not the romantic, religious Christmas of our poets and painters, but the actual Christmas of the everyday world, was a kind of double-faced day, half sacred, half secular; a day which ordinary men and women did not know how to describe or how to prepare for. There was church service and sermon in the morning, and round games and romping in the evening. In practice, the transition between the two was pleasant enough, and did not shock our piety; but how to square the two in theory was more than our plain forefathers could do. "Aye, there was the rub" to our good-natured, bald-headed grandfather, the churchwarden. His notions (bless the good old gentlem'n! I think I see his shining evening face, and that watch and seals that it took two pick-pockets once to fob)—well, his notions about Christmas were, to say the least, exceedingly hazy. Whether he kept it as a descendant of the Druids

(he had Cornish blood in his veins, and was a cousin removed from some mighty Pendragon in the days of old), or whether Christmas came in with the Saxon missionaries, was never made clear to his simple mind. He was told that holly and ivy, not to speak of the mistletoe, were out-and-out heathen practices, and had crept into our churches through the carelessness of these missionaries, who wanted to take the people as they found them, and who winked hard at these heathen practices for the sake of making converts.

I am not sure that my grandfather, the churchwarden, ever reasoned out the question at all; but I think if he did he settled it to his mind in some such way as this: "We must take things as we find them, and make the best of both worlds without thinking of throwing any flying bridge of theory over between the two." My grandfather would have called it high-flying (mysticism was not a word coined then), to piece together things secular and sacred. It worked well in practice, and that was enough for him. Once, indeed, I remember the old gentleman was exceedingly offended by the remark of a rather quaint precisian, who objected on principle to Christmas merry-making. Our straight-laced neighbour compared an English Christmas to Pan—the head of a god with the hoofs and tail of a goat. He had a great deal of undigested classical learning; in fact, was a kind of modern Prynne. I never see him but I think of the great earless Puritan wielding his unpronounceable "Histriomastix," like an iron flail over the heads of the poor wantons and wittings who made up the Court of King Charles. Well, his theory was that as the saturnalia of Roman slaves was held at this season, and that slaves were treated as no better than wild men of the woods, Christmas could be no other than the festival of Pan, and that the mummers and waits of the streets were the lineal descendants of the hairy satyrs and fauns, which once reeled like mad things through the streets of Rome.

I should like you to have seen my grandfather smile, when the Pandean pipes were dragged into the argument, and our village *Bottom* and *Flute*—one, by the way, the sexton, the other the constable—were denounced as something worse than heathen. I once tried to excuse them as Pantheists, but I saw that the joke was taken amiss, so I dropped my attempt at banter, and let him rail on. As to my good old grandfather, he hated theories of all kinds, and had a true-born Englishman's suspicion of symmetry. He, therefore, felt no difficulty whatever about it, when told that his Christmas festivities were half heathen, half Christian. John Bull is, after all, somewhat like his name.

Somibovemque virum, semivirumque bovem.

Like the Minotaur—half man, half ox—he is never

so entirely himself as when he is quite inconsequential, and seated between two jutting horns of a dilemma, without caring a straw for being impaled on either. Our glorious constitution is one huge compromise of this kind between divine right and democracy. Our State Church and Dissent is another grief and vexation to a logic-loving race like the French. So, above all, our way of keeping Christmas is utterly unintelligible to *geist*-loving Germans: they set it down as a puzzle beyond them. It is neither a national holiday only, nor a Church festival only, but something between the two, and combining both in a way which is worthy, they say, of a race of Philistines.

Far be it from us to apply the torch to a mystery which we must be in a manner born to, to understand. No foreigner ever yet came to know who or what the Lord Mayor is. In describing him, they only display their ignorance. So with an English Christmas. It is unique. Its elements are simple enough in themselves; but, like a plum-pudding, it is the mixture, and, above all, the bag in which to put it, which drives the foreigner to despair. What, then, is the key to this mystery? Surely an English Christmas may be transplanted, with care, into our dependencies, and thence, as time goes on, into foreign parts in general. Will no Naturalisation Society take it up, and acclimatise Christmas in Japan and Chili, as eland and the alpaca are acclimatised with us? It is a delicate task, but, with care, it may be accomplished. The secret is as follows:—

To begin, then. The key to Christmas is that beautiful expression—"the charities of the season." Mark here the plural. Love and charity differ in this, that the one is essentially singular, the other essentially a noun of multitude. There is one love, but many charities. We speak of "all the domestic charities of the family home"—we speak of "all the charities of life;" but we never should say, unless we wish to make a mock at it, "all our loves." Love is of one, charity is to many. The river has one fountain-head, but breaks into a delta of streams before it loses itself in the ocean

of life. Thus the philosophy of Christmas (forgive the expression, dear reader, we are trying to explain matters to our Teutonic friend, Tenfelsdröckh) is this, that one great love sets many little charities in motion. As at the first Christmas, the greatest of all was seen in the form of the least, so in every succeeding Christmas a thousand little charities—fireside charities (crickets by the hearth, as Dickens would call them), sick-bed charities, hospital charities, ragged-school charities, school-treat charities (beginning with tea and cake, and ending with never-to-be-forgotten dissolving views)—all these, and many others too numerous to mention, troop in on us at Christmas, and enliven this midwinter season with a whole fairy world of graces, which spring up, like Titania's little people, and dance in a fairy ring round their queen. Love is the queen, at whose bidding these graces troop; and, though tiny in themselves, each of these charities represents something for which England is the better, and the happier. How, or why, we got the name of "Merry England" no one can tell, unless it be in irony; for even as far back as Froissart's time we were said to take our pleasures *moult tristement*. But this much is certain, that for one day in the year we deserve the epithet merry. One day in the three hundred and sixty-five is not all labour and sorrow. For one day in the year upstart people are not ashamed of their poor relations. For one day in the year the beadle is less of a beadle to the parish apprentice: on this day Mr. Bumble is almost a man and a brother, and even Mrs. Grundy is not the name of terror she is on other days. The gain is not great, but it is, at least, something in the sum total of human happiness. Victims as we are to the Gog and Magog of false propriety and prudery, there is one day in the year when the giant drops his iron mace and the giantess puts her enormous bodkin into her bodice, and men and women are free from the fear of each other for at least one day. The millennium is yet, perhaps, a long way off; but an English Christmas Day is, at least, a foretaste of the day when men shall "love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing."

"GLORIA IN EXCELSIS."—A CHRISTMAS REVERIE.

BY JOHN FRANCIS WALLER.



PEAL out, peal out, sweet Christmas bells,

"Gloria in Excelsis!"

As on the morn your music swells,
My heart pours out from all her cells
The honied memories, stored away
Through many a happy year and day,
"Gloria in Excelsis!"

I see, as peal the Christmas bells,

"Gloria in Excelsis!"

A little child, at break of day,
Spring from his crib alert and gay
To chant his Christmas hymn, "This
morn,

Christ, a little child, is born,"

"Gloria in Excelsis!"

I see, as peal the Christmas bells,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"
 A young man standing in the porch
 Of the old ivy-mantled church,
 Watching with eager look a girl
 With sapphire eye and golden curl,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"

I see, as peal the Christmas bells,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"
 I see them both, the man and maid,
 Sitting within the mellow shade
 Of fretted arch in that old aisle,
 As the grand organ swells the while,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"

I see, as peal the Christmas bells,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"
 Through rich-stained glass a holy wave
 Of crimson glory flood the nave,
 And feel as if the wave of light
 Coloured the wave-sound in its flight,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"

I hear, as peal the Christmas bells,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"
 A maiden's treble, sweet and clear,
 Trilling on my charmed ear,
 Blend with a tenor, full and strong,
 As both pour out the sacred song,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"

I see, as peal the Christmas bells,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"
 A happy matron, good and fair,
 With soft blue eye, and rich gold hair,
 Sitting in home's blessed bower,
 Hymning in the happy hour,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"

I see, as peal the Christmas bells,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"
 The man—a husband fond and proud,
 And round them twain fair children crowd:
 I hear them chant—a holy choir,
 Grouped round the cheerful Christmas fire,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"

The vision's past. Peal, Christmas bells,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"
 An old man now, I see and hear,
 Dear forms that bless, glad tones that cheer,
 Look back on those old Christmas times
 With thankful heart, as ring the chimes,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"

Peal out, peal out, sweet Christmas bells,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"
 A gray-tressed wife sits by my side,
 To me she's still my gold-haired bride;
 I kiss her brow—my old eyes swim
 In tears—I sob a wordless hymn,
 "Gloria in Excelsis!"

HOW WE SPENT OUR CHRISTMAS ON THE PACIFIC.

BY W. B. CHREADLE, M.D., AUTHOR OF "THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE BY LAND."



IN the year 1863, the author and another wanderer engaged berths on board the S.S. *Pacific*, from Victoria to San Francisco, where we purposed to spend Christmas; and as she was busy coaling in Esquimalt Harbour, and not expected to get under way until after midnight, we took our luggage on board at dusk, and then crossed over to the other side the harbour, to say good-bye to certain naval officers of our acquaintance, who had snug quarters ashore there. We spent the evening merrily enough, for partings are lightly treated by sailors and travellers habituated to continual change of scene, who easily accept the substitution of a new set of friends and acquaintances in one part of the world for those left behind in another. When the clock struck twelve we took our leave, and Captain Lascelles and Dr. Wallace went down to the beach, to hail a boat from the *Forward* to carry us across to our steamer. We shouted and hailed vigorously, but not the slightest notice was taken of our efforts; the watch on board was either deaf or asleep; and after long and fruitless exertion, we gave up in despair. The lights of our steamer on the other side the harbour were visible from

where we stood, and we expected every moment to see them moving away as she went out to sea. What were we to do? It seemed certain that we should miss our passage to San Francisco.

In this dilemma Dr. W. came to the rescue by proposing to ferry us over in his gig, which, although very leaky, would, he thought, be equal to the short voyage to Esquimalt. The boat lay high and dry on land, ready to be repaired, but we quickly launched her, and, jumping in, seized the oars, and rowed as hard as we could for the *Pacific*. We soon had an additional motive for gaining the opposite shore as quickly as possible, for the little vessel did leak with a vengeance, and before we had accomplished half the distance, the water gained so rapidly that there appeared every probability of our going down in the middle of the harbour, shrouded in darkness, and where no help could possibly reach us. But we tugged manfully at our oars; and although the boat yielded less and less to our efforts, and our progress was painfully slow, we had the satisfaction of running up to the landing-steps, with the boat's gunwale barely above water. Bidding Dr. Wallace a hearty good-bye, and thanking him warmly for his timely assistance, we left him to manage his return voyage as best he might, and



(Drawn by J. D. WATSON.)

"I hear, as peal the Christmas bells,
 'Gloria in Excelsis!'
 A maiden's treble, sweet and clear,
 Trilling on my charmed ear,
 Blend with a tenor, full and strong,
 As both pour out the sacred song,
 'Gloria in Excelsis!'"—p. 248.

went on board the steamer. With some difficulty, we found the steward, a sleepy "coloured gentleman," who directed us to what he was pleased to call, on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, our "state room." This was on the upper deck, after the fashion of American steamers, which have their chief passenger accommodation above, instead of below deck; but, the state room!—a cabin! a box rather, or a cupboard with shelves. Shakespeare, when he used the expression "cabined, cribbed, confined," must have had a prophetic vision of the steamship *Pacific*. The state room was not more than seven feet high, about the same in length, and four or five feet wide. In this little compartment were three shelves, called berths, one above another, and the space between very limited indeed. One of the shelves was occupied by a gentleman already sound asleep; and we essayed to fill up the other two with our respective persons. But this required some management. In the first place, it was impracticable for two people to undress at the same time, and one of us was therefore compelled to pace the deck until the other had succeeded in fitting himself into the niche intended for him. The process of entering the lowest berth was comparatively simple and easy, the approved manner being to extend yourself supine on the floor, and then, by a lateral movement, introduce your body edgewise into bed; but to get into the top berth seemed an impossibility, unless the tenant were carefully introduced and laid out in it by assistants. However, by a series of dexterous evolutions and much perseverance this was at last accomplished, and we slept in peace, awaking in the morning to find ourselves passing through the Straits of San Juan de Fuca.

The ship was crowded with passengers, principally miners, on their way to winter in San Francisco. Men of every nationality: the successful ones arrayed in broadcloth, and sporting massive gold rings and chains; others, ragged, unshaven, and forlorn. There was not sleeping accommodation for half the number, and the moment the cloth was removed after supper, all the upper-deck passengers were required to withdraw from the saloon, and the table and floor were spread with blankets, wherein the bedless company straightway rolled themselves, packed side by side as closely as negroes in a slave-ship. But the great feature of the day, on board our steamer, was the succession of meals. There was only room at the table for a third of the company; and thus there were three sets to breakfast, three to dinner, and three to supper. Eating and drinking were going on from morning to night. By the time the third set had finished breakfast, the first set were ready for dinner; and when the third dinner was over, the hour for the first

supper had arrived. These repasts were conducted with a state which contrasted very ludicrously with the viands, which were set out with an ostentation such as might befit a princely feast. The steward was a gigantic mulatto, of sullen and repulsive aspect, and he ruled over some dozen waiters, of various shades of "colour." At his word of command the dark file of attendants marched down the saloon, one carrying knives, another forks, a third spoons, and a fourth plates; and each placed his particular article on the table at the same instant, keeping time most exactly, and setting it down with emphasis and uniform thump. When this was over, the company were called in by sound of gong, and as soon as they were seated, the band of negroes reappeared, each bearing a dish, and ranged themselves on either side of the table. Then the head steward, standing at the upper end of the room, struck a hand-bell, at which signal each waiter projected his dish at arm's length over the board, simultaneously with the rest. The hand-bell sounded again, and the dishes were placed with instantaneous bang upon the table, and six black hands were held poised over the dish-covers. This grand tableau lasted a moment or two, when the bell clanged a third time, and the covers were whipped off simultaneously, disclosing, not turtle soup, soles, turbot, and salmon, sirloins of beef, or saddles of mutton, but greasy fluids, greasy, indescribable joints, and greasy imitations of French dishes, resting in greasy dishes, and to be eaten with greasy knives and forks off greasy plates. If we were not sea-sick, the sight of dinner was sufficient to give rise to qualms in the most imperturbable stomach. The ceremony with which it was introduced utterly failed to compensate for the unpalatable food thus grandly set forth.

We steamed down the Straits with a fair wind during the first day of the voyage, but towards evening the barometer went down rapidly and suddenly to a point of such extreme depression, that the captain, fearing a storm, hastily put into Neah Bay, a little harbour at the mouth of the Strait, and there cast anchor for the night. The precaution was a timely one, for the wind increased, the sea tossed more and more angrily, and about midnight a white squall burst suddenly down on us from the land, striking the ship with a quick and terrible blow, which seemed as if it must carry everything before it. The masts bent, and groaned, and creaked; the vessel tugged madly at the anchor, and the wind shrieked dismally as it tore through the rigging. Overhead, the clouds chased each other in swift career across the half-grown moon, and the roar of breakers in shore made us thank Heaven that the gale blew from the land. Gust followed gust in rapid succession, each seeming fiercer and more merciless than the last,

and we were prepared to expect that the steamer would break away from her anchor and drift out to sea. The events of the next day proved how providential it was that the anchor held good, and the cable was stout and trusty. Shortly after daylight, the gale having nearly spent itself, and the sea gone down a little, we ventured to get under way again; but before we had cleared the harbour an explosion was heard down below. Steam burst forth from the engine-room, the passengers rushed on deck in consternation, and purposeless confusion reigned for a time. The paddle-wheels gradually ceased to revolve, and then, reversed, slowly backed us into our former position. The steam-chest had given way, and had we not been safely anchored during the storm, we must have been driven, disabled, at the mercy of the tempest, and probably have been wrecked on the rocky shores at the mouth of the bay. A whole day was spent in endeavouring to patch up the shattered steam-chest with iron plates torn up from the floor of the engine-room; and at dusk we paddled slowly out to sea, to put back, a second time disabled, before we had fairly emerged from our harbour of refuge. The next day passed like the preceding, the engineers and crew engaged in tinkering up the machinery, and the passengers amusing themselves by watching the Indians, who crowded round the ship in their light canoes, and bargaining with them for various curiosities of native manufacture, which they eagerly offered for sale.

The conduct of the captain, however, who persistently refused to give any explanation of the extent of the accident, or express any opinion on the probability of satisfactory repairs being effected,

gave rise to much distrust amongst the passengers, and a meeting was held to consider the position of affairs. It was unanimously resolved that a deputation should wait upon the captain to demand that he should either declare that there was no ground for apprehension, or at once put back to Victoria, where the machinery could be thoroughly overhauled and properly repaired. This embassy failed most signally. The master, a singularly taciturn, self-contained Yankee, curtly replied that he should certainly *not* return to Victoria, but intended to go forward to San Francisco, *coute qui coute*, but that he should be most happy to land any of the company who might prefer an indefinite sojourn on the inhospitable coast to taking their chance with the ship. Whereupon the ambassadors returned discomfited, and all relieved their discontent by continual grumbings and direful prognostications. But on awaking the following morning, we discovered that we were fairly at sea again, steaming slowly and cautiously on our way. The sixth day brought us in sight of our destination without further mishap, and shortly after dark we entered the Golden Gate, the entrance to the harbour of San Francisco. But Christmas Day had passed, while we were sheltering in our distress at Neah Bay, uncelebrated, almost unnoticed, for there was little joy to be found in the North Pacific steamer, and a sorry feast prepared by the over-tasked cooks from its ill-furnished larder. Yet we found some compensation in the pleasant dwelling and generous hospitality of the Union Club in the Golden City, and kept our Christmas, by postponement, on the night of our arrival.

DEEPPDALE VICARAGE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARK WARREN."

CHAPTER XLVI.

WHAT THE COUNTESS HAS BEEN DOING.



FRANK'S gig stood waiting for him at the gate of the field. He sprang into it, and drove hastily off. He had a long round of visits to make that morning. I fear his mind was sadly distracted. I fear amid the complication of disorders with which it was his lot to deal, that the image of Lucy played a prominent part—Lucy, and her most unhappy fate. He pictured her, dragged a victim to the altar, sacrificed, as it were, to the tyranny of her mother. True, Sir Geoffrey was good-natured, and might treat her with a certain degree of consideration; but in such a union, where was there food for her heart or her mind? Would she not pine away, and perhaps die? Sooner or later, he would be sure to neglect her. It could not well be otherwise; their want of sympathy would cause them to drop apart.

Alas! and what could Frank do? Were not Lucy's foes those of her own household?

The moment he reached home a note was put into his hands. It was from the countess, and contained, in fact, a polite dismissal. Circumstances had come to light which rendered it desirable that she should employ Dr. Harker.

Frank felt exceedingly annoyed as he read this brief epistle. A painful swimming sensation came over him. In the first place, he would be torn away from Lucy. She would thus lose her only friend. Had the countess discovered that he was her friend, and been resolved to put an end to all succour from that quarter?

"It was very cruel," Frank thought; "strange cruel things did happen in this world!" He had had experience of it, and in both cases the victim had been a woman.

He crushed the note in his hand.

The after-sting was painful enough; the injury

he might have done to Dr. Plume. He went into the study, where he knew the doctor was lying, to break the news to him, as best he could. He expected some tolerably severe reproaches; but, instead of this, Dr. Plume burst into a hearty laugh.

"She is quite welcome to send for Dr. Harker. This is not the first time. When she is out of humour she always sends for Dr. Harker."

"Dear me! is it possible?" cried Frank, immensely relieved.

"My dear fellow, there is nothing impossible to this woman," said the doctor, still highly diverted. "It is no sinecure for *him*, let me tell you. At the end of ten days, we shall have her back, as prodigious as ever."

"I am so glad!" cried Frank, joyfully.

"I don't know that I am. I am getting about tired of her ladyship's freaks," said Dr. Plume.

And now commenced a bitter trial for Frank. Shut out, a second time, from the Manor, he was obliged to go upon hearsay for any tidings of Lucy. He heard, and it almost drove him to despair, that the weddings were fixed for the first of July. The countess had begun to make grand preparations. A triumphal arch was to be erected at the entrance of the park. Flowers were to be strewed in the bridal path, and the populace of Deepdale feasted with a liberality suited to the occasion. In fact, of rejoicings, there were to be no end.

Amid all this, he heard no syllable of Lucy. Many a time, did he look wistfully towards her room in the Manor, as he passed in the distance. But no Lucy was visible. She seemed lost to him for ever!

Dr. Plume sympathised with his young friend. But he, too, was powerless in the matter.

"If it were not for this unfortunate ankle," said he, "I would go up to the Manor, and tell her ladyship a piece of my mind."

But what the good of that would be, Frank hardly knew. As for himself, he grew, day by day, more profoundly wretched. He scarce ate or slept. Never was a man more completely brokenhearted. Had it lasted much longer, I think Frank must have succumbed; but it did not last. The thunder-cloud overhead, that seemed as if pressing the life out of him, burst suddenly, though not in the way either he or Dr. Plume expected.

Late one evening, there came a messenger in haste from the Manor.

Dr. Plume and Mr. Chauncey were to go directly. Lady Lucy was dying.

I cannot describe the effect of this announcement on the two men, who were, a moment before, sitting together in comparative tranquillity. For Lucy was dear to both of them.

The messenger, one of the gold-laced footmen appertaining to the Manor, had to be more explicit. He had to relate, that Lady Lucy had, for some days, been shut up away from every one save her mother.

"The unnatural monster!" muttered Dr. Plume, under his breath. "We can guess what she's been doing."

It had been well known, at the Manor, that Lucy's illness was increasing; but the wedding preparations had been hurried on the more for that. Last night, and the night before, the countess had spent with her daughter. No one had seen the countess until some half-hour ago, when she burst suddenly from the sick chamber, and had ordered a messenger to be despatched "as for his life" to Dr. Plume; and the man had mounted the swiftest horse in the stable, and galloped hither.

During this short recital Dr. Plume's gig was being prepared. Be it possible or impossible, he must go to Lucy.

Frank drove. I don't think he or Dr. Plume exchanged a word. Once only, the doctor burst out with an expression that no one would have supposed him capable of using. Then, again, all was silent.

Lights were hurrying to and fro, at the windows of the Manor. The household seemed in a state of alarm and confusion. Two of the servants were on the watch, to receive and to assist Dr. Plume from the gig. Every moment appeared to be precious, in this case of life and death.

The hall door stood open, and the great hall lamp was flaring wildly. With some difficulty, Dr. Plume was helped from the gig, and leaning on Frank's arm, he entered the house. They had not proceeded many steps ere a voice called down the staircase—

"Is that Dr. Plume?"

They knew the voice: it was that of the countess. If ever remorse was depicted on any human countenance, it was on hers. For Dr. Plume's conjecture had not been far wrong. The countess had shut herself up with Lucy, in order to wring from her a consent, willing or unwilling, to the marriage with Sir Geoffrey. What her motive could be, it was difficult to say. Personally, she could not be supposed to care much for Sir Geoffrey; and had she exercised her usual discernment, the marriage might not have appeared so desirable. But she had willed it, and it must be done. Nothing roused the imperious nature of the countess like opposition.

"As for Lucy, I will soon settle *her*," she had said, using her well-known threat.

But it had not been so easy to settle Lucy. She had been firm as a rock: no amount of bodily weakness could force her to give way. There might be a deeper reason than mere personal objection to Sir Geoffrey—a reason of which Lucy herself was hardly conscious: but so it was. Arguments, persuasions, and threats were alike useless.

The consequence of all this excitement was likely to prove fatal to Lucy. When the countess, irritated at the failure of her schemes, broke out into violent reproaches, Lucy was not in a state to bear it. She became so ill as to alarm her mother, and ultimately oblige her to send in haste for Dr. Plume.

Now, at last, her maternal instinct seemed aroused. She was afraid that Lucy might die. It was well for her if the maternal instinct had not been aroused too late!

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE GOLDEN DEW OF SLEEP.

LUCY had passed into the region of unconsciousness. She had got beyond all hope, or fear, or joy, or sorrow. Reason had been suspended.

"This is your work, Lady Landon," said Dr. Plume, sternly, as he stood by the bedside of the unhappy girl—"your work."

She did not answer: she had sunk upon a chair, and was crouching down, as if all her native spirit were crushed out of her. She knew that it was her work.

Tenderly did Dr. Plume place his hand on his patient's burning forehead. She did not know him. Her vacant eyes rolled to and fro. Her groans were pitiful to hear.

They cut off her beautiful hair: its long silken wavelets lay strewed upon the floor unheeded. They applied all the remedies in their power, but without effect. The delirium, the incoherent ravings, the moans still continued. The poor, shattered brain seemed wandering, hither and thither, on the dark mountains. It was a sight grievous enough to melt the hardest heart.

The heart of the Big Countess was melted. "Oh, Lucy!" cried she, bending over her child, and speaking in a voice of such keen anguish, that it brought tears to every eye, "Lucy, just say one word!—just look at your mother, and tell her you forgive her!"

But Lucy did not speak—did not look. Her eyes were fixed on vacancy. Her lips moved, but it was to utter words that had no meaning. And, with a bitter sigh, the countess turned away and wept.

It was not often that tears flowed from those eyes.

All night, Dr. Plume and Frank watched by the bedside of Lucy. It was a night long to be remembered in the annals of Deepdale Manor. Scarce one of the household retired to rest. Even Blanche and July sat weeping in their rooms. As for the countess, she strode up and down the corridor till morning.

It had not long been daylight, and the countess, ceasing her weary walk, had retired to her boudoir, when a short, grotesque figure, with black streaming hair, was seen flying towards the house. It was Phil, who had heard the news of his sister's illness. He would have rushed, nay, he *did* rush, up-stairs, and would have been in her room in the twinkling of an eye, but that he was met and stopped by Frank. The boy was pale as death, and trembling from head to foot with agitation. So breathless was he, he could but just gasp out the name of Lucy. Lucy—where was Lucy?

Frank whispered an entreaty to be quiet. If he loved his sister, he would make no noise. He would have drawn him away, but Phil stoutly and resolutely refused.

"I will not go till I have seen Lucy!"

Frank told him that Lucy was very ill—too ill to notice anybody. But Phil was importunate, and breaking away from Frank, stepped into the chamber. There he stood, a moment, looking steadily at Lucy.

She was quiet then, and lay, her eyes closed, in one of those fits of exhaustion which were so terrible to witness. She neither saw nor heard her brother. He advanced on tiptoe to the bed, and stooping down, kissed her forehead. In that moment, the wild Irish lad seemed to become the thoughtful and sorrowing man. His eyes filled with tears, and all he uttered, saying the words with infinite pathos, was—"Poor Lucy!"

After that, he planted himself outside the door. To remove him would have been impossible. There he sat, hour after hour, as if he found some consolation in being on the spot. What food he took was brought to him. At night, he lay down on cushions placed there by Frank. When any one passed out of the sick chamber, he would look up eagerly for tidings; but he made no sound. No one could have told that he was there.

"I will not go," whispered he to Frank, "while I can hear her breathe."

Towards evening Dr. Plume, whose health was failing, succumbed to the weariness he felt. He was obliged to return home, and Lucy was left in the hands of Frank. Then was drawn forth all that skill and patience which afterwards so marked the career of the young doctor. Every moment that he could be spared from other professional duties was devoted to close attendance upon Lucy. This was in strict accordance with the wishes of the countess. She clung to Frank in this hour of adversity. She deferred to him, and put unlimited authority into his hands. She refused to have further medical advice. "I have perfect confidence in my two doctors," said she.

It was a terrible yet blissful season for Frank. Terrible, because the angel of death seemed standing ready for his prey. Because, any hour, the thread of that most precious life might be snapped in twain. But blissful, because he had the solace of being with her, of doing all that affection could do to assuage her sufferings, of watching over her with the tenderness of a devoted lover. This at least he could do!

But nature cannot long sustain a period like this. Her storms and convulsions must subside; and so it was with Lucy. Gradually the ravings ceased, the restless tossings subsided, and then there came that most dread interval, the *crisis*—a crisis which must decide her fate, whether it were life or death. Her exhaustion was so profound that it was scarce possible to discover whether she were yet alive. I think she would have died had it not been for Frank. His skill, throughout, had been apparent; now, his promptness equalled his skill. He had the proper remedies for this dangerous moment. By means of them, he disputed the ground inch by inch with death. It was a severe and protracted struggle. Sometimes death appeared inevitable. The spirit fluttered, so to speak, on the confines of its prison, and was almost gone. But love, and skill, and patience kept hold of the feeble thread, and drew it back. Then life, which had ebbed nearly out, flowed feebly forth. At this epoch the physician, under God, appeared as

if he held the fate of Lucy in his hands. *Under God*; for had the fiat gone forth, we know, full well, no human skill could have saved her. But the fiat seemed suspended.

Frank, as hours passed on, looked ghastly with fatigue. Still, he maintained the conflict with an enemy that shall one day be destroyed. For a time did the spirit flutter dubiously, and the skill of the doctor had without ceasing to combat a weakness that seemed as if it must be mortal. Then the pulse became less feeble; the death-like stupor changed its character; it passed, gradually, into sleep—the golden dew of sleep!

Yes, she slept. Her breathing became calm and regular; her face lost its expression of haggard misery. It grew peaceful, even happy.

Frank did not sleep. A repose like this is sometimes delusive. On its soft, deceptive wings the soul has been known to drift into eternity. The crisis was not yet past.

Frank had imposed the most profound silence on the household. Not a sound fell on the ear, save the occasional warbling of some happy bird outside, or the tinkling music of the waterfall in the park. No footstep dared to tread in the precincts of Lucy's chamber.

Frank was never weary. He and the countess sat, in this Sabbath stillness, watching. Sitting by the bedside of her he loved, he prayed, without utterance, it is true, but fervently, and from the depths of his heart.

Hour after hour passed. The form upon the bed moved not: so transparent, so ethereal seemed the face upon the pillow, that now and then Frank sickened with apprehension as he listened.

Yes, she *did* breathe. From out the pale lips came that mysterious essence, that frail, fleeting breath, which, alone, divides us from the unseen world beyond. She *did* breathe, and Frank thanked God and took courage!

The hot summer daylight which, though carefully excluded, had yet made itself felt, now waned away. A cool breeze stirred the curtains that shrouded the windows. The warbling birds burst forth afresh from dell and glade. It was evening. A summer evening such as nature rejoices in, when cool shadows were falling athwart the grass, and every little herb and flower breathed fragrance.

Frank heeded it not. He had been many hours now without rest or food. None but a young and

hardy nature would have been able to resist fatigue so long; nor could he, had not excitement held him up. He knew that, very shortly, the fate of Lucy would be decided. It was no time for him to rest. Presently she stirred, the long lashes that rested upon her cheek began to quiver, the hand that lay on the coverlet moved.

Frank was paler than she was; his very heart seemed to stand still.

She opened her eyes—those soft, dovelike eyes, emblematic of the sweet and gentle soul within. She looked up. Ah! that look repaid for all his fastings and weary vigils. It was a look, not of unconsciousness, but of reason! She recognised him, and she smiled—faintly, it is true, but it was her own smile; and she whispered, as if surprised and half bewildered, "Mr. Chauncey!"

How his heart leaped within him! What a jubilee of praise burst forth from his spirit! God had been very merciful; he had permitted that she should live! It had been very sweet to hang over her, and enjoy to the full this moment of rapture; but it would not have been prudent, either for her sake or his own.

He pressed her poor wasted hand, and gazed tenderly into the eyes that now gave back look for look; but this was all. Then he surrendered her into the hands of her attendants, and quitted the room. He intended to seek the countess, who had only a moment before quitted the room. He knew that, to her, the tidings would be blissful indeed.

Phil was lying asleep on the floor of the corridor outside. Frank stepped over him, and made his way to the boudoir of the countess. She had ostensibly retired to rest, but Frank could hear her pacing up and down the room, with that restless monotony, so painful to listen to, or witness.

When he opened the door, she stopped, and looked eagerly round. She might have guessed how it was from his face. Perhaps she did, for her own lighted up with a vague, uncertain hope. She came close to him and seized his hands, her eyes fixed eagerly upon him.

"Oh!" cried Frank, bursting into tears, for he was unable to control himself any longer, "thank God, the crisis is past; she lives!"

"God bless you, Mr. Chauncey! God Almighty bless you! It is you that have saved my child!"

(To be continued.)

THE LITTLE TOYMAKER.

A CHRISTMAS STORY FOR THE YOUNG.



FEW weeks before Christmas, in a town in Germany, a widow was sitting with her children, all busy with various kinds of work, and at the same time eagerly discussing how much they would have to spare for the Christmas festival, when they had sold the things they were now making.

Otto had just finished a puppet with a fiddle in its hand, which, when pulled by a string, played and danced at the same time.

"Look, mother," said he; "I have now begun the fourth dozen, and I intend to finish eight dozen, which will bring me a fine Christmas dollar."

The mother smiled sadly, and continued to work

at a wreath of flowers, to decorate the simple fireplace.

Otto stole a glance at his mother, whose sorrow went to his heart, and endeavoured to cheer her by praising the skill of his three younger sisters, who were all engaged on some fancy articles, also intended for sale.

"To-morrow," he continued, "Mary and I will go from house to house, till we have disposed of all our stock, and if we have not enough then, we will make more to sell at the Christmas market, so that we shall earn enough, and you, dear mother, will have no trouble, and we will have such a happy Christmas Eve!"

"Yes, dear mother!" added little Godfrey; "do not fret any more about father; he is in heaven, and will have a finer feast than we."

"Ah, children," answered the mother, "if your father had died at home, I could have the consolation of visiting his grave; but to be killed in battle, or perhaps, only wounded, and left to perish on the field of battle—it is too dreadful!"

"But it was an honourable death," said Otto. "I too would be a soldier, and fight for my country."

While he was speaking, Mary, his eldest sister, came in with heightened colour and sparkling eyes and exclaimed—

"Everything is sold! I have been so fortunate! and have brought back much more than we expected."

"Tell us all about it!" cried the two little sisters, while Otto looked at his mother, and said—

"I felt sure Mary would have good fortune: my heart was so light. Now, with God's help, we shall have enough at Christmas for the rent and everything we want."

Mary then continued: "I had been at several houses, but none of my work was sold, and at last came to a very fine one, where I was almost afraid to ring. The maid who opened the door asked what I wanted, and on my telling her I had work for sale, she took my basket to show her mistress, who had several ladies visiting her at the time, and brought it back to me quite empty. That gave me courage to ask if the ladies wanted any toys or flowers for the approaching festival, and the girl brought back a message that her mistress would speak to me herself. I followed her up a wide staircase, covered with such beautiful carpets that I scarcely dared to tread on them, and was told to wait a few minutes in a splendid room full of mirrors and beautiful furniture. Presently a lady entered, dressed in deep mourning, and spoke very kindly to me. She told me she had seen me from the window, when I was standing opposite the house, doubting whether I would venture to go to it, and inquired my name and history. I told her all our circumstances—that our father had been killed in the war nearly a year ago, that our mother was not able, with her small pension, to support six children, that our landlord threatened to sell our furniture for the rent, and that we were trying to earn enough to pay him. She then

promised to buy the flowers and other things for Christmas gifts, and I am to take them to her as soon as they are finished."

"I should like to go with you," said Otto, "and see the good lady and the beautiful house; but she certainly will not want my puppets. I will take them to the toy market, and sell them all to a dealer. I wish the lady had a little boy, and I would make him a present of the best one among them."

"How hard we will work now!" they all cried; "and please, mother, tell us a story, and we shall get on twice as fast."

They quickly seated themselves round the large centre table with various kinds of work, except little Godfrey, who, being only five years old, had to remain idle, but listened attentively while his mother related the following anecdote:—

"Many years ago, during the Thirty Years' War, there was a brave captain, who fought under Tilly at the taking of Magdeburg. Soon after, he marched with his detachment to a small town in the neighbourhood, which he thought would not attempt any resistance; but the inhabitants defended themselves so bravely that the captain withdrew his troops, for he thought that such courageous and resolute people deserved to be spared. Dressing himself as a citizen he visited the town, and became acquainted with some of its chief men, to whom he told how he had saved their town from plunder and destruction. Not long after, he left the army, bought a house in the town, and, in the course of a year, married the mayor's daughter, and afterwards was chosen mayor himself; and this office has been held by his family till your grandfather, his descendant, died. Your father, as you know, preferred a soldier's career, for he inherited the courage of his ancestor, the Austrian Hilbrand."

"And I will follow his example!" cried Otto, with sparkling eyes.

While they were thus talking, a knock was heard at the door, which Otto quickly opened, and a lady entered, whom Mary at once recognised. She addressed some words of sympathy to the widow, and, looking at the group, asked, with surprise, if they were all her children.

"Your flowers and fancywork have pleased me greatly," she said; "and I should like to see the rest of the things you have prepared for Christmas."

The lady was astonished at the industry of the family. She admired the puppets which Otto had made; and his mother told her of his intention of becoming a soldier.

"I am thankful," she continued, "that my children have been led to one who has a heart to feel for the orphans; for they felt it very hard at first to have to take their work to sell."

After giving the children some more commissions, and leaving with Mary a bag of sweetmeats for them, the lady took leave, and Otto, who lighted her to the door, saw her get into a handsome carriage, and said to himself, "I should like some day to have such a carriage and horses."

On his return to the room he found his mother with tears in her eyes, holding a little packet, which Mary had found among the bonbons. It contained ten dollars. The children spent the rest of the evening thinking of all their mother could buy with the money.

The next day was fine and bright, though very cold, and Otto set out for a village some miles distant, where some of his toys had been bespoke, which he carried in a good-sized bag. Just as he reached a wood, through which he had to pass, he met an officer on a fine charger. This was a charming sight to Otto, who followed them with his eyes till both horse and rider were out of sight. He passed through the wood without meeting any one else, and at the other side of it he found a handsome pocket-book on the ground, which he concluded must belong to the officer he had met. A little farther on, he came to a small shop, where an old woman sold cakes and apples. He asked if she knew who the officer was who had passed that way. She said she had remarked him, but did not know his name nor where he lived.

She invited Otto to come into her shop to warm himself. He did so, saying he was sorry he had no money to buy anything.

The old woman inquired why he wanted to know the officer's name, and he showed her the pocket-book which he had.

"Why," said she, "you cannot buy anything! Look in that, and I am sure you will find money."

"But it is not mine," interrupted he; "and if there were a thousand dollars in it, I would not touch one penny."

Quite frightened at the idea, Otto left the shop, and continued his road to the village. On his way back, he hoped he might meet with the officer again and restore him his purse; and, in fact, he had scarcely entered the wood when he met a rider, but in plain clothes, who asked if he had found anything.

"My master, General —, told me he met a youth of your age and appearance this morning, just before he discovered he had dropped his pocket-book, containing important documents."

Before he had finished speaking, Otto had drawn the book from his bag, and handed it to the man, who, after thanking him and inquiring his name and address, rode quickly back. Otto was delighted to

have returned the pocket-book to its owner, and felt as if a weight had been taken off his heart.

On his return home, he related his adventure to his mother and sisters, who considered him quite a hero.

The following morning, as the family were assembled for breakfast, a soldier came to inquire for Otto, and said General — wished to see him at once. Otto immediately prepared to accompany him; and, after walking some distance, they stopped at a large house, and Otto was conducted to a handsome room, where he saw not only the officer whom he had met the day before, but the lady who had already shown them so much kindness. The general inquired where he had found the book, and Otto related the whole circumstance.

"And what reward do you expect for your honesty?" said the general.

"Sir," replied Otto, "I wish above all things to become a soldier. If you will help me to do so, I shall be so happy."

"I will willingly do all in my power," said he; "and I am sure you will make a good soldier."

Ring for the servant, he desired Otto to be served with breakfast, and, while he was eating it, the general's wife told him of her previous knowledge of Otto and his family, and proposed to him that, as they had no child (their only son, for whom she was still in mourning, having died a year or two before), they should take charge of Otto's education, and send him to a military school to prepare for the career he so much wished.

The general, who was much interested in the handsome fine-spirited boy, gladly entered into his wife's plan, and, on Otto's return, told him of their intention, which he heard with delight and astonishment, and begged leave to go at once and tell his mother the good news.

"We will accompany you ourselves," said the general; and, ordering his carriage, they were soon at the house of the widow, who heard with gratitude of her son's good fortune.

The general, who loved children, was much pleased with the family; and when Christmas Eve came they were all assembled in his beautiful drawing-room, round the gaily-decorated tree, from which each received some useful gift. In the course of time, Otto attained the object of his ambition, and became a captain, and the support and pride of his widowed mother and orphan sisters.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

HARK! 'tis the voice of bells, sweet toned and clear,
Breaking the silence of the starry night;
For lo! another Christmas doth appear,
To fill our hearts with gladness and delight.

And many a slumberer, on his couch of rest,
Starts from his dreams those blessed sounds to hear.
Whilst grateful aspirations fill his breast
To Him whose bounty crowns the circling year.

And joyfully he hails the blessed morn,
So dear to all, so holy and so fair;
Whilst soft the words, "To us a child is born,"
Float in sweet music on the midnight air.

Distinct, then, still as the night-wind brings
Those sounds, they to the listening ear are given,
Until imagination spreads her wings,
And waits the sleeper to her dreams of heaven.

E. A. G.